

Liesl and the Terrible Krampus Christmas: Part I

By Yu May

Once upon a time, in the small village of Weiburg in Germany in the 1800s, there lived a young woman named Liesl. She was rather short for her age, had dimples, pretty rose-gold hair which she liked to tie in braids, and a pretty round face. When she was a good girl, she resembled a peach. When she was a bad little girl, she resembled a pig.

Liesl had an older brother, an older sister, a younger brother, and a younger sister, all of whom were known for being well-behaved at home, at church, and at school. But Liesl was a headstrong and disobedient child who always did what she wanted, regardless of what her parents told her to do. She loved to crash her sled into the neighbor children's snowmen, throw snowballs at Pastor Luthor's cat Snowball, and sneak sweets from the school kitchen. Liesl had a habit of talking back to her parents, being rude to her elders, and refusing to do her chores.

After hearing bad reports from the neighbors and teachers, Liesl's mother, who Liesl called Mutter, sat her down for a serious conversation. "Liesl, my dear, you must change your ways. Santa Claus is watching, and if you continue to be disobedient and rude, he won't bring you any presents this year."

Liesl scoffed and replied arrogantly, "I don't care about Santa Claus or his presents, Mutter! I can do whatever I want!"

Her father, who Liesl called Vater, overheard the conversation and chimed in, "Well, there's another visitor you should be afraid of. His name is Krampus. It's said that he travels the world, punishing disobedient children. On the night before Christmas, he stuffs them into his sack and takes them away to his shack in the woods, where he spanks them with thick bundles of birch switches all tied together."

Liesl rolled her eyes, waving her hand in the air. "Vater! Krampus is just a silly story! I'm not afraid of him."

"Careful, Liesl. If your attitude doesn't improve, your only Christmas present will be a spanking this year."

Vater's censure gave Liesl pause, but as Christmas Eve approached, she soon forgot the warning. She spent Christmas' Eve's Eve pulling a few of her favorite pranks, but was careful not to get caught. After all, what her parents didn't know, wouldn't hurt them! That night, Liesl snuggled into her bed with a smug, self-satisfied smile on her face. But

at the break of day, she was abruptly awakened by mysterious noises. Trembling with fear, she opened her eyes only to discover a tall man with goat horns and a fur-covered body standing before her. "Krampus? No! You're not real!"

Just as her father had warned, Krampus swiftly scooped her up, struggling and protesting, into his enormous sack. He then whisked her away and bumpity-bumpity down the stairs. But no matter how loudly Liesl yelled, nobody came to help her.

"Mutter, help! Vater, help! Someone, anyone, save me!"

Liesl saw the top of the sack opening. Had her father come to rescue her? But the face that greeted her was the hairy, horned Krampus! "Now, I can't carry you all the way to my shack in this sack, can I? Such a disobedient girl, you kick and scream too much! But I've just the thing for you." Krampus patted the top of what looked like a narrow, red wooden barrel with straps. Lifting the lid, he wrapped Liesl tightly in a blanket and dropped her in neatly. When the lid popped down, muffling her cries, her world fell into darkness. Then the kidnapper put his hairy arms through the straps and carried his napped kid into the snow.

Suddenly, Liesl heard a voice! There were plenty of holes in the barrel so she could breathe, and if she pressed her eyes against some of them or the cracks between the slats of the wood, she could get glimpses of the outside world.

Her prayers had been answered! It was Pastor Luther! "Ah! Krampus! I hope you're having a blessed Christmas Eve!"

Liesl felt her weight shift as Krampus spun around to show off the red barrel for inspection. "Indeed! I'm just taking Fraulein Liesl here to my old shed in the woods."

Liesl heard a pause, and a sweet, approving mew from Snowball, who must have been nestled on Pastor Luthor's lap. "Ah! Fraulein Leisl? Well, I know she wasn't a very good girl this year, but I'm sad to see she has ended up on Krampus' 'Naughty List'! Oh well, I suppose it can't be helped! Carry on, Herr Krampus!"

Snug tight in her barrel, Liesl felt like she had just been tossed into the middle of the ocean while tied to a rock. She thought about all the times she had pelted Snowball with snowballs.

Pastor Luther snapped his fingers. "Oh! I almost forgot! A Christmas present for you, Herr Krampus! To help you walk when your old injury acts up!"

Krampus slipped a willow cane into one of the holes at the top of the barrel. It was so slender, he didn't even need to open it. "Ah! This is perfect! This will be very useful, Pfarrer Luthor!"

Liesl felt it slide down next to her. In the dark, she couldn't see it clearly, but later she would notice the little red bow tied neatly to it, with a card that said, "For old wayfarer's hurts, and for hurting young wayfarers! -The Luthor Family"

Next, Liesl heard the voice of her beloved old teacher, Frau Hilde, who Liesl had known since her time in Kindergarten years ago. "Ah! Krampus! I see you've caught a naughty child in need of a 'Tracht Prügel'?"

Pressing her face against the barrel, Liesl pleaded. "Schullehrer Hilde! It's me! Your little Liesl!"

This time, Liesl was actually able to catch a glimpse of Hilde's face through the hole. But Hilde only smiled sadly. "Is that my Fräulein Liesl? Well, I can't say I'm surprised after all the sweets that got stolen from the kitchen this year!"

Hilde seemed to slowly spin away from Liesl, along with all hope, as Krampus twisted the sack with his tight grip. "Frau Hilde, might I borrow a yardstick from you? I have some measuring to do for my carpentry work!"

"Of course you may, Krampus! You know, I can think of something else you could measure out with it, if you get tired of using your bundles of birch switches! In fact, you can keep this one, so if it happens to break, don't worry." With that, a thick hickory yardstick was inserted into the barrel, right next to the willow cane. Carved into it were musical notation and the words, "Reading, and Writing, and 'Rithmetic, Taught to the Tune of the Hick'ry Stick!" Both rested between Liesl's feet, and no matter how she twisted and turned, she could never escape the terrible reminders of her fate. She thought about all the sweets she had stolen, how sweet the forbidden treats had seemed then, and how she was about to pay for every single one of them now. She'd gladly have traded all the candy in the world to escape!

Krampus visited each house in the neighborhood in turn. Liesl overheard some parents praising their children for being very good this year, while others were tempted to let Krampus take their naughty children to the woods to join Leisl, before their children begged for mercy and promised to be good for the entire year. Some of her neighbors

and friends expressed sympathy when they heard Liesl's cries, while others laughed and joked that Krampus should have visited her long ago.

"Well, I am a busy devil. You know, I only come out on Christmas Eve to hunt since I have to spend the entire year spanking naughty children!" explained Krampus, as he sipped at a mug of hot, spiced apple cider one of the neighbors had offered him.

But no one seemed surprised to find out that Liesl was being taken to Krampus' shack in the woods. And all of them offered Krampus a present. He soon needed his large sack to carry everything, so Liesl couldn't see much. She could only hear their descriptions, and guess at what some of the presents might be.

Krampus rustled through the massive sack, listing off his bounty, "Two slippers, a hairbrush, a bath brush, a wooden spoon, a paddle, a razor strap, a tawse, a riding crop, a tightly woven cord, a martinet, but what are these?"

Liesl heard the voice of her matronly Aunt Gertrude, who had lectured Liesl about needing a good whipping after Liesl had destroyed her cousins' snowmen for the third time that winter. "Ah, that's my favorite! It's called a flapper. I'm surprised you haven't heard of this one. It's made of several layers of soft deer skin."

Unable to contain herself any longer, Liesl poked her finger to lift up the lid of the barrel and peeped out to see what awaited her. She instantly regretted her decision when she saw "The Flapper," but she couldn't tear her eyes away from the scene that unfolded.

Krampus seemed impressed by the curious flapper. "Ah, but it's shaped like a wooden paddle? It has a hole in the middle. I assume that's to cut down on wind resistance, yah?"

"Of course! But it has a second effect. That hole gives the flapper its name. Ah! Gretchen, what have I told you about not sneaking into my jams!"

Little cousin Gretchen, who shared Liesl's sweet tooth, had tried to take advantage of her mother's distraction to sneak out of bed in her pajamas and pilfer homemade preserves from the cupboard. Gretchen's frizzy carrot-colored hair seemed to crackle at the shock of being discovered. She squeaked like a mouse, dropping the tart cherry jam jar, which shattered on the floor, and rather pointlessly tried to wipe the jam onto her "jammies" to "hide" the evidence.

Aunt Gertrude clapped her hands, and snatched up both the flapper and her sticky, jam-encrusted daughter. "This is perfect! Gretchen, let's give good Herr Krampus a demonstration! I almost can't be mad at you for having such impeccable timing... Almost." With that, Aunt Gertrude unbuttoned the flaps of Gretchen's drop seat, and tucked her daughter tightly against her waist under her thickly muscled right arm. The penitent Gretchen pleaded and groaned, but she didn't bite and kick the way Liesl had done the last few times she had been given hand-spankings as a warning for her various ongoing behavioral issues.

True to its name, the flapper landed across Gretchen's squirming bottom with a resounding "FWHAP!" leaving a white spot square on the center of her left cheek, which quickly flushed to red. Although she was trying her very best to be good, Gretchen's pajama footies did start to kick and dance, but it was futile.

To Liesl's horror, a thick, circular welt raised on the spot where the flapper had landed, the size of a silver dollar. Aunt Gertrude explained the physics as Gretchen stretched and squirmed, unable to escape the throbbing welt. "When aimed properly, you can raise a welt the size of this hole at the precise spot it lands. No risk of bruising, but with only a few well-placed strokes..." Aunt Gertrude landed a second blow to Gretchen's right cheek. "You can give a naughty jam thief a reminder that will last for days!" Sure enough, Gretchen was bawling as she expressed sincere repentance and begged for forgiveness. The second welt slowly rose, an afterburn that was even worse than the initial blow. Only two spanks, and Gretchen was more sore and more sorry than most girls would be after many long minutes of hand spanking.

Gertrude set down her daughter and addressed Krampus as Gretchen war danced around them. "Now, I suppose you've come to take Gretchen to your shed, along with Liesl?"

Gretchen had been furiously rubbing the welts, only to find rubbing them made them sting all the worse, and dancing in place unable to do anything else. But at these words, she started, all thoughts of the welts temporarily vanishing. "But, Mutter! I've tried to be a good girl this year! Apart from the jam, I haven't been that naughty, have I?"

"Last year, when Krampus visited you, Gretchen, you promised me you were going to be a good girl all year long. It's Christmas Eve, and you were being very naughty by stealing my jam. That means you didn't keep your promise! Liesl isn't the only naughty child who could use a lesson from Krampus!"

Gretchen sank onto her knees and trundled towards her mother and Krampus, her hands held up in prayer. "I know I deserve a spanking, but please don't let Herr Krampus take me away, Mutter! Please, Herr Krampus, I haven't been on your naughty list for almost an entire year!"

Krampus stroked his goat-like beard, before putting on his spectacles and examining his list. "Hmm. Well, it is true that I haven't gotten any bad reports about Fraulein Gretchen to add to my Naughty List since last Christmas Eve. I suppose I can leave the decision up to your Mutter. Frau Gertrude, what say you?"

Aunt Gertrude hummed and contemplated her dilemma. "Hmm. A thief who steals my jam certainly deserves a durned-good drubbing!" Gretchen threw herself at her mother's feet, clinging to her apron as though hoping Krampus wouldn't be able to take her away if she only held on tight. Gretchen swayed back and forth, first crying to her mother, then pleading to Krampus, then offering prayers of repentance and protection, using words she'd memorized from her child's prayer book, when Gertrude's heart finally melted.

"Well, I suppose it'd be rude to inconvenience Herr Krampus when it's already this late on Christmas Eve. But if there's any stealing, even if it's one little finger in my jams, I'm writing a letter to Krampus. Now, Gretchen, march your naughty gesæze up to bed, and I'll be along to spank you myself before I tuck you in."

Gretchen stood up, enraptured, knowing that she was spared the terrible fate of being spanked all day, every day, for an entire year by Krampus. "Praise the Lord!" She ran, danced, and sang, the drop seat flapping madly behind her, before the welts suddenly returned to her memory as they stretched uncomfortably. With a flinch, Gretchen paused on the stairs to examine them. "Will I lose all of my Christmas presents tomorrow, like I did last year when Krampus came for me? Will I get a spanking as my Christmas Day present?"

Krampus beamed and held up the flapper Gertrude had gifted him. "I think I've been paid handsomely for my services already."

Aunt Gertrude's matronly bosom heaved with a hearty laugh. "Yes! Christmas is a time to remember the forgiveness of sins. You're forgiven, Gretchen. Now go lie on your bed and get ready for your spanking. The first thing I want to see when I come up is your wicked little bottom waiting for me like an unwrapped Christmas present!"

"Yes, Mutter!" Nodding enthusiastically, Gretchen rushed to obey. She dove onto her bed and grabbed a pillow to rest under her waist. As she lay there, her bottom laid bare

and poking in the air to await a thorough hand spanking on Christmas Eve, Gretchen thought about how there was nothing more wonderful than being forgiven!

Gretchen folded her hands and bowed her head. "Thank you, Father, for all that we receive! May your strong hand guide me to be a good girl next year. Thank you for my Mutter and Vater. Thank you for my Christmas presents. And thank you that I do not have to go visit Krampus' shed with naughty Liesl!"

Gretchen finished her prayer, and as she remembered all the snowmen who had been brutally murdered by Liesl recently, Gretchen smiled wickedly and imagined what was in store for Liesl. These cheerful considerations occupied Gretchen's thoughts until her mother came to tuck her in, at which point...well, Gretchen had other things on her mind from that point on. But that's another story!

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Inside Krampus' red barrel, Liesl trembled. Krampus might not have been real to her until that morning, but the Christmas Day spanking tradition was all too real. The legends said that parents had to give Krampus all their child's presents in order to ransom them. Once returned home, these naughty children were spanked multiple times on Christmas Day, from morning until night, to remind them to never need a visit from Krampus again.

Liesl had always assumed that the part about Krampus was just make believe, but she remembered both big-brother Hans and big-sister Johanna had gotten Christmas Day spankings in the past.

But now that she knew Krampus was real, she wondered if she would ever celebrate Christmas or know forgiveness ever again. As Krampus put away the strange new "Flapper," she felt herself being lifted into the air, and heard the bump of the sacks of presents against the sides of the barrel. With his other hand, Krampus lit his torch, and bid Aunt Gertrude "Auf Wiedersehen!"

The last thing Liesl saw before the darkness of the forest swallowed them up was her own Aunt Gertrude cheerfully waving her goodbye, before rolling up her sleeves and heading up to deliver Gretchen's Christmas Eve present. Liesl thought about how happy Gretchen was to be shown the mercy of a bedtime spanking as opposed to being sent to Krampus' shed. For the first time in an entire year, Liesl wished she had been a good girl. For the first time that entire Christmas Eve, Liesl started to feel sorry not just for her poor bottom, but also sorry for her poor choices.

To Be Continued!
End of Part I